



PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the 291st meeting held on 29th August 2011 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall

Present: Tom Ballantine, Sandra Blake, Archie Burns, Celia Butterworth, Diana Cairns, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Lilian Graham, Caroline Hosking, Andrew Patterson (Portobello Council of Churches), David Scott (Portobello Community Centre), John Stewart (PAS), Nick Stroud, Leon Thompson, Anne Ward (PCATS), Sean Watters (Towerbank Parents Council), Frances Wraith (Brightons & Rosefield Residents).

Apologies: Nelson Johnstone, Peter McColl, Joe Madden (Portobello Open Door), Brenda Molony (*Portobello Reporter*), Katie Quinn (CEC), Ros Sutherland (PPAG), Margaret Williamson (Portobello High School), William Wilson.

In attendance: Cllr Mike Bridgman, Cllr Maureen Child, Sheila Gilmore M.P., Cllr Stephen Hawkins, Ben McLeish (Gilberstoun Residents), Sarah Woodford (City of Edinburgh Council).

291.1 Chair's welcome

John Stewart welcomed everyone to the meeting, and announced that William Wilson had resigned from the Community Council. He then introduced Sarah Woodford, the City Council's new Town Centre Coordinator for Portobello.

291.2 Police report

No report this time.

291.3 Sarah Woodford, Town Centre Coordinator

The City Council identified nine local 'town centres' in Edinburgh, and appointed three Town Centre Coordinators to promote them, initially for two years and with a budget of £5,000 for each of the nine. Sarah, who has a background in tourism and marketing, is responsible for Portobello, Leith Walk and Leith Central. The City Council devised an action plan to encourage local businesses, and this would be the basis for developing local plans. Possible initiatives would include a newsletter for businesses and the use of social networking to encourage local and visiting customers. Several points emerged in the ensuing discussion:

- There are limits on the amount of car parking available in Portobello, so it would be important to make best use of what there is.
- There is some information about the Town Centre Coordinators on the City Council's website (at http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/1539/town_centre_management).
- The only practical way to bring more people into Portobello is by public transport; Sarah is already in discussions about seaside-branding buses that are used on the 26 route, and was also asked to encourage the reinstatement of Portobello's train station.
- There needs to be better signage from Edinburgh to Portobello and from Portobello to its best attractions (such as the beach and the community centre). Stephen Hawkins pointed out that the City Council aims to minimise useful street signage because it distracts car drivers.
- Portobello should be included more prominently on maps of the city and in city websites. John Stewart asked that the Portobello Architectural Heritage Trail leaflet be made available through the City Council's website.
- The 'bus interchange' in Portobello needs to be updated.
- The nine town centres and their coordinators are not competing with each other, though all share the same challenges of surviving in a difficult economic climate, and would be doing their best for their local businesses.

Ben McLeish asked about the visions for Edinburgh and for Portobello, and how the Community Council could contribute to these. Sarah agreed that it would be helpful for the Community Council to set up a sub-group to discuss this, and Ben, Diana Cairns, Nick Stroud and Leon Thompson volunteered to meet with her to explore possibilities and report back to the next meeting. Anyone else interested in this group was invited to email Ben. Stephen Hawkins suggested that this could lead up to a public consultation event.

Sarah said she would be happy to hear from anyone with suggestions for helping Portobello businesses (email sarah.woodford@edinburgh.gov.uk, tel 0131 529 3527).

- * **Action: Ben McLeish to convene a meeting of the sub-group with Sarah Woodford.**

291.4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Sean Watters pointed out that the relationship between the Joppa Tennis Courts Club and the Community Council was not made sufficiently clear in item 290.7. The Club could not be “affiliated” to the Community Council but must be a definite group with at least one representative a member of both, because of the contractual obligation to the City Council. Tom Ballantine and Leon Thompson agreed to sort out these details and report back to the next meeting.

Diana Cairns asked that item 290.10e be reworded to say that “It was suggested that a cafe would be preferable ...”.

There were no further comments, but the minutes were not formally adopted.

- * **Action: Tom Ballantine and Leon Thompson to clarify the relationship between the Joppa Tennis Courts Club and the Community Council.**

291.5 Matters arising

- * **291.5a** People urinating in Bath Street (290.5a). This was reported to be a problem all along the Promenade. Maureen Child and Stephen Hawkins said it was important to keep pressing the City Council to maintain or improve toilet facilities; Nick Stroud was asked to write about this.

- * **Action: Nick Stroud to write to Mark Turley to request improvements for residents and visitors, to include the period following pub closing times.**

- * **291.5b** Vandalism in local shops (290.5b). *Ongoing.*

- * **291.5c** Community safety and Neighbourhood Watch schemes (290.5c). *Ongoing.*

- * **Action: Nick Stroud to follow up these points with Sgt. Young.**

291.5d Flooding at Brighton Place (290.3). Katie Quinn reported by email that the Gully Team had inspected the area and would carry out any necessary repairs.

291.5e Coordination of High Street resurfacing with utilities work (290.3). Katie Quinn reported by email that utility companies have to register any large-scale works three months before they are carried out. Nothing has been logged for Portobello High Street in September.

291.5f ‘Hit squads’ (290.3). *see item 291.10d below.*

291.5g Pavement ramps at top of Pittville Street (290.3). Katie Quinn reported by email that these had been reinstated at the beginning of July.

291.5h Flooding at Brighton Crescent (290.3). Katie Quinn reported by email that the gullies in West Brighton Crescent had been serviced on 14th July and were working well again; those in East Brighton Crescent had been inspected on 26th October 2010 and were still functioning well.

291.5i Overhanging branches in Bridge Street car park and Coillesdene Sheltered Housing (290.3). Katie Quinn reported by email that the trees had been inspected and orders raised to cut them back; this work was due to have taken place in August.

291.5j Road resurfacing in Coillesdene Avenue (290.3). Katie Quinn reported by email that the remaining area to be resurfaced was the carriageway from the junction with Morton Street to the junction with Milton Drive, and the work would be carried out in the 2013/2014 schedule of works.

291.5k Joppa Tennis Courts Club (290.7). *See item 291.4 above.*

291.5l Cycling report (290.8). John Stewart had advised about the presence of the ‘cycling in Portobello’ report in the Library, as requested. Maureen Child had obtained copies of the report and offered to have one scanned for electronic distribution.

291.5m Topics and speakers for future meetings (290.8). Sean Watters suggested inviting an official from the City’s Planning Department, and Archie Burns suggested someone from the Planning Aid charity. Ben McLeish said it was important to build relationships with Council officials; Frances Wraith feared this would be pointless if officials were already biased against local communities, but Maureen Child said this made it even more important to establish a dialogue. Caroline Hosking was concerned that City of Edinburgh planners interpreted the new planning guidelines more harshly than necessary for local communities.

- * **Action: Office bearers to draft a possible programme of speakers and topics for future meetings.**

291.5n A War Memorial for Portobello (290.9). Nick Stroud had written an article for the *Portobello Reporter* as requested.

291.5o Planning feedback (290.10e). John Stewart had written as requested about the Pizza Hut opening hours, Kinnaird Park, 121 Portobello High Street and 11 Rosefield Street.

- * **291.5p** Cars parked inconsiderately in Fishwives’ Causeway (290.11a). Diana Cairns to write to Neighbourhood Office.

291.6 Agree Agenda and AOB

Several items were identified for discussion under AOB.

291.7 Threatened privatisation of City Council services

Sandra Blake reported on a meeting she had attended about the City Council’s ‘Alternative Business Model’. Options being explored to save money included the possible privatisation of cleansing, road and vehicle maintenance, and care services. There had been two councillors and a union representative at the meeting but very little useful information had been forthcoming. A decision expected on 25th August had been deferred until October. She was worried that a significant change was under way in Edinburgh, and had been for at least a year, but without good information or supporting evidence.

Mike Bridgman reported that no decisions had been taken yet on privatising services, but that it was important to go through a tendering exercise to see if the Council could get better value for the ‘public pound’. Stephen Hawkins mentioned that internal City Council services were being assessed as a public sector comparator for keeping the services in-house. Sheila Gilmore observed that home care services could possibly look cheaper on paper but this could lead to undesirable consequences, and she thought this would be a useful topic for a future meeting of the Community Council. Ben McLeish pointed out that the City Council had outsourced services already, but warned that it might have to pay VAT as well as the private contractor’s profit margin, making it much harder to outsource profitably; the City Councillors were asked to check this aspect.

Maureen Child observed that in-house service providers are usually able to respond more flexibly to unexpected demands than privatised ones. Stephen Hawkins hoped to learn more about the Business Model at a briefing meeting the following day. Frances Wraith pointed out that privatisation would almost inevitably lead to inequalities in services, which in turn would lead to inequalities in public health and wellbeing.

John Stewart asked Sandra to write to the City Council’s Chief Executive expressing concern for the inadequate consultation over a matter of vital public concern, and while recognising problems of funding public services, asking the City Council not to push through a controversial measure.

- * **Action: City Councillors to check whether VAT charges would offset any perceived advantages in privatising Council services.**
- * **Sandra Blake to write to Sue Bruce, circulating a draft for comment.**

291.8 Community Council consultation and Village Show

Diana Cairns had circulated a PDF of the draft community consultation questionnaire and Sean Watters had created an online version. Community councillors were asked to fill in one or other of these and feed back their comments to John Stewart by Friday 2nd September so that he could distribute the questionnaire via the Community Council stall at the Village Show on 4th September. Ben McLeish warned that there might be Data Protection issues in asking for respondents' names and addresses, and Sean Watters was asked to check this aspect.

The Village Show would take place from 2pm to 5pm on Sunday 4th September in Rosefield Park. Volunteers for the Community Council included Sandra Blake, Caroline Hosking, John Stewart, Ros Sutherland, Anne Ward and Sean Watters; Diana Cairns offered to draw up a rota.

- * **Action: Sean Watters to check the Data Protection aspect of the community survey.**
- * **Action: Diana Cairns to draw up a rota for the PCC stall at the Village Show.**

291.9 Motorbikes in Gilberstoun

Ben McLeish reported that there had been a low-level problem for several years of young people riding motorbikes recklessly in the Gilberstoun neighbourhood; a bad accident on the path to Newcraighall last year had calmed this down but it was now becoming a problem again. The police had asked for incidents to be reported to them but then didn't seem to do anything about it. Maureen Child observed however that reporting problems to the police with as much detail as possible did lead to action; although their policy is not to chase antisocial motorcyclists for fear of causing accidents, the police follow up reports and have confiscated motorbikes from persistent offenders. (Contact details for the local Safer Neighbourhood Team: email ADivSNTCraigmillarPortobello@lbp.pnn.police.uk, tel 0131 652 4147.) Stephen Hawkins raised similar concerns about jet-skis approaching bathers on the beach and suggested that any such incident should similarly be reported to the police.

- * **Action: Nick Stroud to refer this problem to Sgt. Young.**
- * **Action: Anyone seeing antisocial motorcycling or jet-skiing to report it to the Police with as much detail as possible.**

291.10 Reports

291.10a Police: no report this time.

291.10b Treasurer: The Community Council had £1,737.15 at the end of July 2011. Expenditure since the June meeting totalled £98.73, for a donation to Portobello High School's Cruden Cup, expenses for the AGM, flowers for Margaret Munro, and the hire of the Old Parish Church Hall for the Hustings event in April. For the end of year accounts presented at the May meeting the treasurer reported that Joppa Tennis Club had not reimbursed the Community Council for the annual payment of the £50 rent on the courts; this had now been received. The bank statement for August would be with the Treasurer early in September. Forthcoming expenditure would include £231.03 for the annual insurance of the interpretation boards, and public liability insurance for the tennis courts of £159 which would then be reimbursed by the JTC club. The annual grant of circa £800 from the City of Edinburgh Council was expected shortly.

291.10c Neighbourhood Partnership: no report this time.

291.10d Environmental Update: Katie Quinn sent apologies for this meeting, but had sent a poster and offered leaflets about the 'Neighbourhood Pride' initiative to improve streets in East Edinburgh during September. Eight different Council services would be working together on one street at a time, and would be requiring full access with no cars parked for a period of four hours. Plenty of notice would be given, with further details available from the East Neighbourhood Environment Team (email eastteam@edinburgh.gov.uk, tel 0131 529 3111). There were no comments or requests for Katie.

291.10e Planning: John Stewart reported on the outcomes of several previous issues: permission had been granted to raise the height of the building at 78 Portobello High Street, and the applications for a cafe at 121 Portobello High Street and to demolish the house at 11 Rosefield Street had been withdrawn. A new application had been lodged to create a cake and tea shop at 100 Portobello High Street, and it was agreed

that John Stewart should comment on this consistently with our previous comments on the proposal for 121 Portobello High Street.

Archie Burns asked if John could circulate news of local planning applications to the Community Council; Maria Devoy pointed out that this information is already available on *Porty Online*. (It is at <http://porty.org.uk/planning/index.php>)

* **Action: John Stewart to comment on the application to create a cafe at 100 Portobello High Street.**

* **Action: Joe Madden to consider adding a link from the Community Council website to the ‘planning’ section on *Porty Online*.**

291.10f Signs and Plaques: Celia Butterworth reported that the new backdrop for the three community noticeboards, using a photograph kindly provided by Lee Kindness, was in place. Work on the seaside board would be suspended while the geology board was repaired. The probable cost of this would be around £200, which could be claimed off insurance but that would result in the insurance premium being put up; the alternative was for the Community Council and Amenity Society to share the cost. This was agreed.

291.10g Community Centre: David Scott reported that the next management meeting would be held on Tuesday 13th September, and that the work to upgrade the lighting, sound and curtains for the stage had been completed, and was a great improvement.

291.10h MP and Councillors

Sheila Gilmore, Maureen Child and Stephen Hawkins circulated written reports. The City Council’s decision to terminate the tramline at Haymarket was discussed at some length, with arguments presented for and against the decision. Tom Ballantine described the decision to terminate at Haymarket as a “PR catastrophe”.

291.11 Any Other Business

291.11a Festival fireworks train service

Dawson Currie pointed out that the traditional train service would be provided for people attending the firework concert and display on Sunday evening (4th September). On the inward trip this would leave Newcraighall at 20:05 and Brunstane at 20:09, reaching Edinburgh at 20:17; the return trip would leave Waverley at 22:25, getting to Brunstane at 22:33 and Newcraighall at 22:37.

291.11b Portobello Organic Market

Diana Cairns reminded the meeting that the Organic Market in Brighton Park on Saturday 3rd September would be celebrating its first anniversary.

291.11c Big Things On The Beach

Diana Cairns summarised a week of events in a public arts festival being organised by Big Things On The Beach. This would include a ‘human public art installation’ called ‘ToxMe’ on Saturday morning to highlight the levels of various kinds of toxicity in our environment. Full details would be available on the BTOTB website at <http://www.bigthingsonthebeach.org.uk/>

291.12 Future meetings

Meetings are held on the final Monday of each month, except July and December, at 7:30pm, in Portobello Baptist Church Hall, 185 Portobello High Street, Edinburgh EH15 1EU.

The next meeting is on 26th September 2011

Subsequent dates are: 31st October 2011
28th November 2011
30th January 2012 (no meeting in December)

Portobello Community Council on the Web: <http://www.portobellocc.org/>